

Protecting Communities and the Environment: Fuels Management Conference

Wildland Fire Use

Workgroup members: Wayne Cook-USFS, Roy Hall-USFS, Dean Clark-NPS, Mike Frary-BLM, Louisa Evers-BLM, Barbara Bonefeld-USFS, Kato Howard-BLM, Lee Schmunk-BIA, Dianne MacLean-USFWS

Issue Statement

- A full range of strategies and tactics is necessary to accomplish interagency fire and resource management objectives.
- A common interagency planning, implementation and accounting process is necessary for all wildland fire responses.

Policy

(Priority 1)

- Provide incentives for implementing fire use
 - Line officers
 - Cost benefits

What: Recognition by realignment of budget into preparedness funding.

Who: National/Department

When: Short to Mid-term (1-4 years)

Rationale: To provide for cost effectiveness and to capture resource, social, political, and economic benefits.

(Priority 2)

- WFU accomplishments require an interagency standard reporting process.

What: We need one place to record acres, with similar weighting as fuels accomplishment acres.

Who: National/Departmental level

When: Short-term (1 year)

Rationale: Need to accurately account for fire program accomplishments. Develop and implement a uniform interagency reporting process.

(Priority 6)

- Suppression fire meets a WFU event

What: Enable management of these incidents for the most appropriate management response. (whether WFU or suppression)

Who: National/Departmental level

When: Short-term (1 year)

Rationale: Increase opportunities to meet land use plan direction.

Planning

(Priority 7)

- Changing maximum manageable area during an incident.

What: Above statement

Who: National/Departmental fire and resources staff

When: Mid-term (2-4 years)

Rationale: Implementation, cost efficiency, safety and resource benefits.

(Priority 5)

- Wildland Fire Situation Analysis and Wildland Fire Implementation Plan.

What: We need a uniform planning, decision making and documentation process for all wildland fire. Risk and complexity confuse and not differentiated.

Who: National/Departmental Level

When: Mid-term

Rationale: The current processes cause confusion and lack efficiency.

Resources and Personnel

(Priority 8)

- Fire Use Modules – differences in: mission, use, titles, qualifications, standardization, terminology (fire use, prescribed fire, fuels)

What: Different in composition and use of modules. Need NWCG standardization.

Who: NWCG

When: Mid-term (2-4 years)

Rationale: Conform with NWCG standards for fire resources ordered.

(Priority 4)

- Long duration wildland fire management training and course updates are necessary for all levels in all agencies. (administrators, line officers, fire management staff, resources staffs, cooperators, IMT command and general staff, etc.)

What: There is a general lack of knowledge and skills related to the management of long duration wildland fires.

Who: NWCG and Agency direction

When: Short to Mid-term (1-4 years)

Rationale: Fundamental lack of understanding of the role of the WFU program.

Internal and External Education

(Priority 3)

- Risks associated with managing Wildland Fire Use

What: There is a lack of understanding amongst agency personnel and the public of trade-offs of wildland fire suppression and wildland fire use.

Who: All levels

When: Short to Long-Term (1-5+ years)

Rationale: It is difficult to meet resource objectives through the WFU program until the message, risks and long-term strategies are understood and accepted.

Related issues

(Priority 8)

- Suppressing all human caused fires
 - Liability and legal issues related to how to manage incidents
 - Ecologically the ignition source is irrelevant

What: Thoroughly research possible legal and social ramifications of utilizing human-caused ignitions within the WFU program.

Who: National/Departmental Level (Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture)

When: Mid to Long-Term (3-5+ years)

Rationale: Some administrators and fire managers would like to utilize human caused fires as WFU events. Lands that are planned WFU don't rely on specific ignition sources, only an ignition source. This option requires thorough analysis by the Solicitor's Office and the Office of General Counsel. There is a fear that liability issues far outweigh the potential long-term benefits of allowing human caused ignitions to be managed as WFU events. If the decision is made to manage fires this way, the current U.S. Codes (USC) and appropriate Code of Federal Regulations would have to be modified and approved by the Secretaries of both Departments. There is also a need to thoroughly understand the relationship of this issue to all the different state liability laws since state liability rules in most cases.

(Priority 3)

- Management on Federal vs. Non Federal lands
 - Including trust lands, MOUs, agreements (e.g. other ownerships)

What: Allow fire use management on non-federal lands to be incorporated into federal WFU management. We manage lands other than federal lands for suppression, including trust lands, MOUs, agreements (e.g. other ownerships).

Who: Departmental/National Level (All levels)

When: Mid to Long-Term (3-5+ years)

Rationale: Although this interagency management is already in effect in some areas such as Colorado, it is apparent that some locales are not ready to implement this form of "seamless" management immediately. As more and more county, state and other management agencies incorporate their fire management plans with the federal agencies, this form of management will become more prevalent. Agency administrators will need more education governing this process. For us to plan and use WFU, we must be able to use interagency planning. If we do not address this issue, we will be limited to individual unit plans by agency. Also, this issue is partly tied

up in the issue concerning use of state and local fire agency personnel in that state law may not provide the authority to use wildland fires for resource benefits.

(Priority 1)

- Competition for same resources
 - IMT vs. FUMT vs. NIMO vs. All Risk vs. BAER
 - Prioritization of resources, i.e. Suppression vs. WFU vs. Rx fires
 - Same pool of resources
 - Suppression often gets priority

What: Resources for all fire are scarce and compete between use and local priorities. Currently, within all Geographic Areas, wildland fire use events usually receive a lower priority for resources than do suppression fires regardless of management response that is being implemented.

Who: All levels

When: Short to Mid-Term (1-3 years)

Rationale: Currently competition between all fire types strains resource and availability. A central prioritization system needs to be in place and utilized. Resource benefits are historically not given equal weight in many cases to suppression objectives or values at risk. Granted, a fire located in the WUI should receive a priority over a confinement, modified suppression or WFU. It is often the case however, that any given WFU event does not even receive the same priority as a confinement fire which in essence is being managed in the same fashion with the same results. Agencies and the public must be educated "soon" as to the benefits of fire in many ecosystems and fire must be allowed to perform its' function in those ecosystems wherever possible.

(Priority 4)

- Contractors may have difficulty getting into training and meeting requirements to efficiently support wildland fire events
 - Limited training opportunities exist in some locations

What: Contractors in some areas have difficulty obtaining the needed classroom training to qualify for fire positions.

Who: Geographic or subgeographic areas where this issue is a problem.

When: Short to Mid-term (1-4 years)

Rationale: Currently, fire use events already utilize contractors in many functions including line qualified personnel. The training opportunities and limitations are no different for WFU than suppression positions. Contractor training appears to be more of a local or regional issue than a national one. Contractors have no difficulty obtaining needed classroom training in Oregon and Washington as there are plenty of contract instructors available consisting primarily of retired

federal employees. But, with limited training available in some location and slots used to train federal employees, contractors are having a hard time complying with standards to compete for work.

(Priority 6)

- Access to state resources is difficult due to respective missions
 - Some states do not have authority to support WFU

What: Some states do not have authority to support WFU. Many state forestry and fire organizations are limited by state statutes on their ability to perform functions within WFU events.

Who: State Foresters, Legislatures, and Governors

When: Mid to Long-Term (3-5+ years)

Rationale: Most state agencies are not allowed to consider WFU through agreements and MOU's. Until states can modify their statutes to include WFU with suppression on an equal basis, their employees will be limited on their ability to perform in conjunction with management of WFU events.

(Priority 5)

- Training qualification system updates are necessary based on policy and practice changes
 - Utilization of FBANs and LTANs
 - Availability and complexity of technology

What: Technology and training needs are advancing at a faster rate than training systems and the qualifications rating systems can keep pace.

Availability of technology has increased use of positions not traditionally used in suppression, i.e. FBAN's and LTAN's

Who: National, Agency and Departmental

When: Mid to Long-Term (3-5+ years)

Rationale: Competition between WFU and suppression has limited the availability of specific resources. The current qualification and training system is currently designed to be reactionary rather than proactive. The current NWCG Fire Use Working Team primarily emphasizes prescribed fire in the committee mission and a separate group needs to be developed to just work with WFU and long-term suppression events. This group needs close inter-working relationships with specialists from the fire use and computer applications fields.

(Priority 2)

- Teams should be ordered with appropriate personnel and skills based on agency administrator's needs.

What: Teams, especially the IMT variety, often are dispatched to an incident without a thorough communication with the agency administrator as to the mission and actual needs of the hosting unit. In some cases IC's

are putting pressure on local agencies to take the team size they may not need.

Who: National Level (Agencies & NWCG)

When: Short to Mid-Term (1-3 years)

Rationale: Incident commanders MUST communicate with the hosting agency administrator to determine needs rather than to deploy on an incident with a full or long-team. Team size is dictated by need, not what the IC's wants to bring. Also, the overly liberal use of team pre-orders should be thoroughly studied by the cooperating agencies. This issue has a direct relationship to large fire cost containment as well.

(Priority 7)

- Red/Blue Book should be used as a fire management guide (operations) not for policy and direction. The Wildland Fire Implementation Guide should be included in the Red Book
 - Aim to have one book for all agencies.
 - Aim to have one guide for fire suppression and wildland fire use.

What: Current field guides are used as policy manuals, rather than operational guides. A single reference for federal wildland fire operations reduces confusion and better insures consistent management. Currently, the field and in many cases, agency administrators are often confused with the wide array of policy and operational guides they must consult on a frequent basis.

Who: National, Agency (Fire Directors) & Departmental

When: Short to Mid-Term (1-4 years)

Rationale: With two operation guides used, guidance is often confusing and limited guidance about WFU is included in both guides. While policy statements may differ between agencies, the actual operating procedures, with a few exceptions, do not. It clutters an operations guide and increases its size unnecessarily to include policy statements. Policy statements should remain in the appropriate handbooks and manuals. Most interagency fire management organizations are having to "wade" through multiple, agency specific guides and policies regarding fire use. All agencies engaged in fire management within USDA and USDO I should be operating with one single set of operational guides and fire management policies.